

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 04501 130723Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SS-15 AID-05 CIAE-00 INR-07
IO-13 JUSE-00 NSAE-00 SNM-02 TRSE-00 USIA-06
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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO USMISSION GENEVA
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DEA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

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POSTS FOR DEA/NACORD

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: SNAR UN LE
SUBJ: PRESS REPORT CONCERNING LEBANESE HASHISH

REF: GENEVA 7638 (NOTAL)

1. PRESS REPORT OF 100,000 TONS OF HASHISH READY TO LEAVE
LEBANON IS GREATLY EXAGGERATED. WE WONDER IF AUTHOR OF THIS
ARTICLE MAY HAVE SAMPLED PRODUCT.

2. OUR PRESENT INFORMATION IS THAT 1977 HASHISH CROP FROM
BEKAA VALLEY IS VERY GOOD, BOTH IN QUALITY AND QUANTITY, BUT
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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 04501 130723Z

HIGHEST ESTIMATE FROM THE GROWERS IS APPROXIMATELY ONE HUNDRED
THOUSAND KILOS (100,000 KG) NOT TONS.

3. THE LOCATION OF POSSIBLE CUSTOMERS LOOKS ACCURATE TO US.
THE DEALERS IN CYPRUS AND THE ITALIAN PORTS ARE, HOWEVER,
LARGELY MIDDLE MEN AND A SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITY OF THE
CROP IS REPORTEDLY DESTINED FOR NORTHERN EUROPE.

4. THE FAVORITE MODE OF TRANSPORTATION IS BY SHIP, FACILITATED BY THE LARGE NUMBER OF SMALL COASTERS TRAVELING THE MEDITERRANEAN. BECAUSE OF LEBANESE INTERNAL SECURITY FORCE COMPLACENCE AND/OR INEFFICIENCY, MANY "ILLEGAL" PORTS OPERATE ALONG THE LEBANESE COAST AND OFFICIALS AT THE LEGAL PORTS ARE POWERLESS TO INTERFERE AS GROWERS/DEALERS IN LEBANON TEND TO BE WELL CONNECTED POLITICALLY.

5. THERE HAVE BEEN EFFORTS MADE TO ESTABLISH A LEBANESE OPIUM CROP AND TURKISH EXPERTS HAVE BEEN IMPORTED TO PROVIDE CULTIVATION GUIDANCE, BUT OUR LATEST INFORMATION IS THAT THE PROGRAM HAS NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL. THE MAIN CUSTOMERS SO FAR HAVE BEEN EGYPTIANS, AND THEY HAVE BEEN DISSATISFIED, DESCRIBING THE LEBANESE OPIUM AS TOO WEAK AND FOUL-TASTING. AS A RESULT, THE GROWERS ARE RELUCTANT TO SPEND MORE TIME AND MONEY ON OPIUM WHEN HASHISH SALES AND CROPS ARE GOOD.

6. BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF LEBANESE GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY IN BEKAA AREA WHERE HASHISH IS GROWN, GROWERS ARE QUITE OPEN AND RELAXED AND THERE IS LITTLE OR NO ATTEMPT MADE TO HIDE FIELDS UNDER CULTIVATION.

7. WHILE WE CANNOT COMMENT ON THE "STREET PRICE," LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 BEIRUT 04501 130723Z

OUTSIDE LEBANON, THE GROWERS GENERALLY ADMIT TO A SALE PRICE OF BETWEEN 600 TO 900 LEBANESE POUNDS PER KILO.

8. IN SUMMARY, BECAUSE THE LEBANESE AUTHORITIES ARE UNABLE AND UNWILLING TO CONTROL THE PRODUCTION AND TRAFFIC OF HASHISH, IT HAS BEEN AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE READILY AVAILABLE IN GREAT QUANTITY. THE FISH ARTICLE QUOTED IN REFTEL IS HIGHLY EXAGGERATED, HOWEVER, REGARDING THE AMOUNT UNDER CULTIVATION OR READY FOR SHIPMENT. GOL INTERIOR MINISTER SALMAN STATED ON SEP 7 IN RESPONSE TO THE FISH ARTICLE THAT THE REPORT WAS "A GROSS EXAGGERATION." HE SAID HASHISH IN LEBANON WAS AN OLD PROBLEM BUT THAT 4,000 KILOGRAMS OF HASHISH AND 34 KILOGRAMS OF HASHISH OIL HAD BEEN CONFISCATED BY GOL AUTHORITIES IN RECENT MONTHS. THIS LEAVES OPEN THE POSSIBILITY, OF COURSE, THAT A MUCH LARGER QUANTITY WAS SUCCESSFULLY EXPORTED.

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